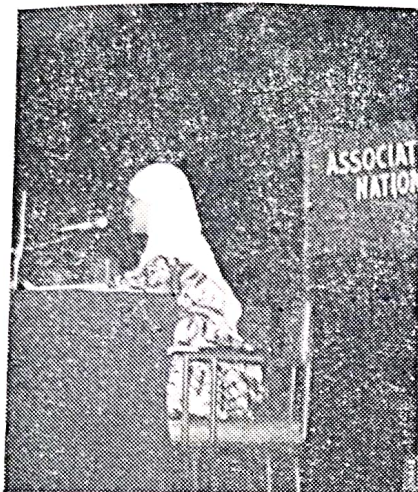




LINK AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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All the way from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, I flew here to join you for this wonderful Seminar on "Better Books for Children" and I am very happy indeed to be given the opportunity to speak briefly on how to establish cooperation and links between the developed and developing countries in the field of children's literature.

Children, our future generation, are special people. They deserve good books, for books play an essential role in their training and upbringing. They read to learn. They are expanding their minds all the time, making new discoveries, enlarging their vocabulary. And knowing this, the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka or DBP, attached to the government of Malaysia, gave

special attention to our children by publishing children's books and a monthly magazine, *Dewan Pelajar*.

Two of DBP's main objectives are:

- a) To develop and enrich the National Language.
- b) To develop literary talents especially in the National Language.

In its policy regarding children's books, the DBP aims at cultivating and stimulating the reading habits in the National Language and to cultivate an interest and appreciation in literature among children. The Children's Books Section was established in 1975 and children's magazine, *Dewan Pelajar* was first published in 1966. The DBP has its translations department and

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we translate books including children's books from ASIA, ASEAN and all over the world.

When we talk about cooperation between the developed and developing countries in the field of literature, I believe translation is one aspect that we should seriously think about. I know that not only Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka has done this, but many voluntary organizations such as the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC), International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) has also taken the steps, and many others, including works by writers of the developing countries should be given special attention and children's literature from these countries translated, so that a two-way communication is developed between the developed and developing countries. This kind of communication is important, because it helps our children in understanding and knowing each other's culture and way of life. This understanding will help to strengthen their mutual understanding and relationship and enrich their literatures, broaden their knowledge and shape the future.

We could also exchange ideas and technology. This could be done through visits of writers, publishers, illustrators and professionals in the field of children's literature. These visits must be a two-way process in order for all involved to gain its full advantages. In addition to this, we could also exchange videos and films concerning the children of our respective countries.

Conventions such as this is another way of exchanging ideas and helping each other. In this Seminar, we could discuss about the availability and accessibility of reading material or is my country facing problems in providing books for our children? We could discuss problems such as these in this kind of yearly convention and try to find ways to solve such problems.

To publish books especially for children, where colour, illustrations, graphics etc. play an important role is not an easy task. Publication of children's books is an expansive affair. Not many publishers, especially in the developing countries, would want to go on with such expensive production cost. However, this would hinder their contribution in the field of children's literature. The more advanced countries should help in subsidising these cost, for the sake of the children of the world. Some of the publishing industries in the developing countries are facing tremendous problems such as the shortage of materials needed to produce books, production expertise, good translators etc. These resulted in the possibility of publishing only one children's book a year. As I was told, this happened in Nepal, a few years back.

A committee too should be formed to discuss seriously about copyright. As we all know, royalties for original writers and fees for translations, are always expensive, this hinder the process of translations. Probably, a special rate should be considered for the sake of the developing countries.

These are some of the ways that we can look into. Before I conclude, let me read to you a poem written by a well-known Malaysian poet, Usman Awang entitled: GIFT

(for my child's birthday)—Usman Awang
My child cannot yet talk

*his heart is as white as the face of the
Prophet
his smiles and crying are the words of
this heart*

*the flower blossoming in the morning sun
Friends come with gifts,
token of good luck, token of respect
in honour of his birthday.
O, why do you bring him guns
artillery tanks and war planes—
though only playthings*

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